



# MEDREGION UPDATE



MedRegion Office, Tunis

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**MEPI MedRegion Update Newsletter is produced by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) MedRegion Office at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia.**

**We welcome your feedback and suggestions!**

Entrepreneurship is a key vehicle to improve economic conditions, create jobs, and affect social change in the MENA region. MEPI is committed to fostering economic and social entrepreneurship to unlock innovation, spur private sector development, and create new employment opportunities for the region's young populations. Through its partnership with local actors, MEPI's economic projects promote job skills training and economic advocacy to help cultivate broad-based opportunities for everyone.

## Improving Employment Opportunities for Disadvantaged Tunisian Youth



MEPI partner, the Tunisian Association of Communication and Space Sciences (ATUCOM) was among ten start-ups invited by Microsoft Innovation Center (MIC) to present their projects at the *ICT4All* forum during the sixth MIC annual Start-Up Sponsorship Program. ATUCOM showcased its partnership with MEPI through the *“Improving Employment Opportunities for Rural*

*Youth”* project which is empowering a group of disadvantaged young Tunisians in rural communities to augment their entrepreneurial skills towards creating greater employment opportunities.

During the forum, held on November 11 to 14, ATUCOM organized a two-day workshop entitled “Spreading Digital Culture and the Employment of Rural

Youth”. The workshop included two sessions on youth employment in the Information and Technology field and e-management.

Over the last seven months, ATUCOM worked with 30 young Tunisians aged 20-30 to develop their IT and entrepreneurial skills towards enhancing their employability and integration into the professional job market.

The training program combines technological education, professional development, and volunteerism. The project will provide trainees with a business consultancy and entrepreneurial support to maintain their newly created small businesses. ■

## Entrepreneurship Promotion and Economic Empowerment of Widows and Youth

Women's access to economic opportunities is crucial to the region's economic growth. MEPI supports projects that enhance women's marketable skills and expand women's participation in the economy.

After her husband passed away, Khoulood Salah Al Nuaimi, from Jordan, became the only support for her family. Khoulood runs a small generating income activity selling cleaning products. In her attempt to look for more sustainable sources of income, Khoulood found out about the MEPI-funded entrepreneurship and economic empowerment training program, offered by Women Access to Entrepreneurship Development and Training Society (WAEDAT). During her training, Khoulood showed much enthusiasm and interest in learning new entrepreneurial and



employability skills that will enable her to launch her own small business. "I would like to learn new skills and launch my own small business to make living", said Khoulood. During the business training projects, Khoulood produced jewelry, which she sold.

Approximately 160 women, aged 18 to 24, are benefiting from this project which consists of a comprehensive entrepreneurship promotion and economic empowerment program

that supports widows and orphan girls in 6 governorates of Jordan: Amman, Jarash, Ajloun, Irbid, Mafraq, and Azarqa. The project manager, Nabeel Abou Shariha stated that this project is "opening new opportunities for widows and orphan girls to earn new entrepreneurship skills and be independent and self-reliant."

(WAEDAT) partnered with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to conduct core business and entrepreneurial training programs for

participants. It conducted field visits to each governorate and held series of entrepreneurship and business development workshops to raise awareness among widows and girls about local economic opportunities and explaining how launching small businesses can enhance their economic situations.

Through customized technical trainings, WAEDAT identified the skills and knowledge of participants in order to better develop a training program that meets the specific objectives and fill specific skills gap for each community. Participants from the six governments developed a total of 90 business plans for their projects in different sectors including; handicrafts, textiles, cooking, managerial and accountancy. ■

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## Palestinian Women Engage in Entrepreneurship and Community Activism

The *Business Women Forum (BWF)* is empowering young Palestinian women entrepreneurs to be financially independent, through building their capacity to develop business plans and launch their own businesses.

With MEPI support, BWF conducted the “Business Plan Competition (BPC) Program” to benefit 80 aspiring women entrepreneurs aged 20 to 40. Participants were recent graduates from business schools and businesswomen who needed assistance setting up and running their business projects.

The BPC program team coordinated with the firm *Agility for Management and Financial Consulting* to conduct series of entrepreneurial



workshops in Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, and Jericho on how to develop a business plan. Selected participants received advanced entrepreneurship training with BWF to further develop their businesses plans.

Successful projects will be sustained through promotional and media support and business management

consultation provided by BWF and its partners.

Eleven participants stood out with their successful business plans, among which two participants were announced as winners of the competition.

BWF will conduct a business-shadowing opportunities for the two winners at similar businesses.

At the meantime, BWF gave the

opportunity to one winner to take part in a three-day Entrepreneurship program in Jordan that includes pitching event in the presence of local and international investors. The aim of the trip is to present the business idea, gain new skills, and exchange experiences with successful women entrepreneurs from Jordan. ■

### Stay Connected with MEPI

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## My Destiny in My Hands

In partnership with MEPI, the Organization *Will and Citizenship* has launched a project entitled "My Destiny in My Hand" to empower rural women from three underprivileged areas of Matmata, Ouedhref and Chatt Esselem in Tunisia.



The trainer stated that participants are making a remarkable progress in terms of the quality of the finished products and variety of design. Participants will be able to use these newly acquired skills to produce and sell their artisan

The project is providing women with entrepreneurial skills that would help them generate additional income for themselves and their families.

Mr. Chamseddine Mechri, a university teacher and product designer conducted a series of a four-day training workshops in Chatt Esselem and Ouedhref.



The sessions focused producing items with palm leaves and rugs. Participants, aged 25-

45, were introduced to the know-how of producing new designs.

creation to better support their families and gain economic independence. ■



### Middle East Partnership Initiative

#### MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office Tunis administers MEPI local grant projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza. Each year, MEPI provides a significant number of local grants directly to local organizations based in the Middle East and North Africa. These Grants promote reform and civic activism at the local and national levels in the Middle East and North Africa, build the institutional capacity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and strengthen civil society.

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